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Writing

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Money Cannot Buy Love

` Single parent households have become more prominent over the past fifty years. A large number of those single parent households began as two parent homes in which the couple decided to separate. In most cases of separation where children are apart of the equation, the couple seeks out a court order to provide legal restraints concerning which parent will be granted full custody or if the couple is going to have joint custody of the children. Other legal restraints may include visitation if there is joint custody and if one parent is granted full custody of the children the other may be ordered to pay child support which would be paid directly to the custodial parent to supply the children with things that they need to ensure their wellbeing. In those specific cases where there is only a court order for child support, the noncustodial parent simply pays monetary support and does not supply the child with emotional support provided by visitation. Even though many argue that having a non-custodial parent present in both monetary and emotional aspects of a child’s life does not make a difference. However, it is important that the non-custodial parent pay monetary child support and maintain visitation. Doing so reassures the child that both parents are emotionally and financially invested, gives the non-custodial parent insight to what the child needs, and prevents the custodial parent from playing the “gatekeeper” role.

Often time noncustodial parents do not realize how much emotional support by way of visitation combined with monetary support can make a difference in the child’s life. There is no argument against monetary child support being an important facet to a child’s wellbeing. Money can easily buy a child clothes, supplies, food, shelter, and miscellaneous things. However, money cannot provide a child with happiness. In order to give a child the complete package of wellbeing, emotional support has to be present. If the noncustodial parent is granted the opportunity to have visitation, participating in visitation, the noncustodial parent will have a chance to get to know the child and be able to see firsthand how the monetary support is benefiting the child and if more is needed. Also, if both parents are in agreement to giving the child total wellbeing, they will develop a healthy relationship, which will in turn provide the child with a sense of security. There has been research that follows and analyzes such situations dealing with noncustodial or nonresidential parents and their relationship with their noncustodial children in terms of contact through visitation and monetary child support.

Research supporting the presence of noncustodial parents in the lives of their children was reported by Chien-Chung Huang. Huang begins his report of the study by stating that “nonresident fathers’ financial support and time are both important to children’s well-being..”(54). However, he does not ignore the fact that the correlation between the two is not strongly represented in the positive or the negative (54). As he sets out to prove that it is important, he mentions the fact that children living in single-mother family homes are more likely to have behavioral problems along with economic hardship and low educational achievement. The main reason for this stems from nonresident fathers and their limited financial and nonfinancial involvement (54). He acknowledges that nonresidential fathers and the pay of child support from them are increasing. With that increase Huang states “fathers may define their role as a combination of financial and nonfinancial involvement and treat them as substitutes for each other”, which poses a problem and doesn’t allow the child complete wellbeing (55).

Other researchers by the name of Paul R. Amato at Pennsylvania State University and Joan G. Gilbreth at University of Nebraska-Lincoln observed how nonresidential fathers and children’s wellbeing relate to each other in terms of behavior and development. Amato & Gilbreth observe that “when children feel loved and cared for by parents, their sense of emotional security is strengthened. This emotional security, in turn, helps children cope with stress and makes them less vulnerable to anxiety and depression (559). Children especially need support from both parents to feel loved. According to Amato & Gilbreth, support is reflected in behaviors such as responsiveness encouragement, instruction, and everyday assistance. These behaviors facilitate children’s positive development by conveying a basic sense of trust, reinforcing self-concepts of worth and competence, and promoting academic success (559). If a child only receives money from their noncustodial parent and emotional support or what Amato & Gilbreth define as support he or she would not be able to positively develop.

With both monetary and emotional support equally involved, the noncustodial parent will be able to see firsthand what their child needs. There have been many issues with noncustodial parents worried about how their monetary child support is being used or spent. Most of those issues come about in a negative light, assuming the noncustodial parent believes that the custodial parent may be miss-using the money. This issue can also be looked at in a brighter light. For instance fathers who want to see how their monetary child support is being used, can do so by participating in emotional support by way of visitation. However Amato and Gilbreth point out “a nonresidential father who visits his children primarily to see how his child support dollars are being spent is unlikely to influence his children’s development in a positive manner”(559). Here, a problem presents its self. The noncustodial parent has to genuinely want to visit their child or it will ultimately damage the child. Lenna Nepomnyaschy argues a positive point. She states that “Fathers who see their children may be better informed about what their children need and therefore may pay more support” (95). Nepomnyaschy also brings about another positive aspect of noncustodial parent and child visitation: “if visiting fathers are pleased with how mothers are taking care of their children, they may be willing to pay more support.”(95).

Noncustodial parents have to deal with other issues that affect the wellbeing of their children. This is shown in research deeper in the study done by Chien-Chung Huang, it shows where he examines the fact that custodial parents can make the balance between a noncustodial parents providing monetarily and emotional support difficult by playing the “gatekeeper” role. The gatekeeper role describes a custodial parent who is purposefully alienating the child from his or her other noncustodial parent (Austin paragraph 2). Gatekeeping can consist of other behaviors such as scheduling visitation of the child by the noncustodial parent while know that there is a conflict in time. Gatekeeping in terms of monetary child support can directly affect the emotional support of the child. Custodial parents may pose a situation where the noncustodial parent cannot visit the children unless monetary support has been paid. Chien-Chung Huang observes that “if mothers play a gatekeeper role, paying child support may be required of fathers if they wish to gain access to their children” (55). However, even though this may pose an issue to the relationship of the noncustodial parent and the child, Lenna Nepomnyaschy observes that “payments could lead to more contact through the mother’s role of gatekeeper”(94). If both monetary and emotional support by visitation is balanced gatekeeping does not have to take place and it never has to come down to the issue of “pay-to-see”.

As it has been supported by research and articles, children of broken homes cannot receive the emotional and monetary support their parents under one roof. If one parent has been granted custody the noncustodial parent should see it as his or her duty to provide the children with the same amount of resources and support as he or she would have if their parents had not split. It is possible for children to succeed after the break-up of their parents. The enforcement of monetary child support has cause confusion. A child can survive with money, there is no question concerning that, however money cannot buy a child the love of both parents. A child’s wellbeing depends on the both the money and emotional support of his or her parents. The insurance of a child’s wellbeing can never be guaranteed, however, if the noncustodial parent is there to provide support and visitation the child has a better chance at being developmentally stable, knowing that both of their parents are emotional and financially invested in his or her life. A child’s world should never be complicated by complications with their parents. If the noncustodial parent is worried about the spending of funds for the child, his or her visitation and involvement will ease the stress, worry, and conflict between the parents providing the child with the security of know that his or her parents are happy. No child likes to be the center of a twisted game, the idea that some custodial parent use children in the game of gate keep is sad, however the game never has to be paid if the noncustodial parent if present and supportive in both monetary and emotional aspects. The idea that he or she is not a being used as a game of keeps give the child a sense of self-worth in know that they are loved and treasure by both parents.

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